



The final night of the Aruba Wine, Food & Art Festival II was a feast for the senses!

If you look in the dictionary for a definition of “La Dolce Vita” (The Sweet Life) you will likely find a description of the Aruba Wine, Food, and Art Festival, which, though only in its second year, proved that it is an idea whose time has arrived.

Three days of delightful doings ended on Saturday night with a spectacularly sparkling event that echoed and improved on last year. Organizers reveal that the elegant champagne dinner prepared by guest chefs Michael Cressotti and Koji Kagawa of Sushi Samba, New York was completely sold out. As the evening advanced, those that were fortunate enough to partake of the delicacies prepared by the “Dynamic Duo” knew that it was time and money well spent.

The dinner began with a delicate tiradito of local wahoo lightly marinated in black truffle oil, yuzu, jalapeno and yamamomo. It was paired with a Moet et Chandon Brut Imperial. For those that thought they would never try raw fish, it was a revelation.

The second course was Yellowtail Snapper Ceviche in a garlic-ginger soy with shaved celery and shichimi, which was matched with Moet et Chandon White Star. As garlic-ginger has always been one of our favorite seasoning combinations, we could say this reporter was prejudiced in their enjoyment of this dish, but it would appear that the other diners agreed.

Just to show that the chefs were adept at other dishes than fish dishes, the main course was a tender cut of the finest Kobe Beef with Peruvian Corn in Manchego Cheese and a teriyaki sauce. The accompaniment for this dish of strong character was a champagne with the same forthright nature, a celebrate Dom Perignon. The last dinner course before a refreshing dessert was Tuna Sushi with Osetra caviar and foie gras. One of the favorite champagnes of the night, a Moet et Chandon Rose Imperial was the perfect match.

All this ended on a sweet and spicy note prepared by Chef Pascal Cherance of Malabar restaurant in Caracas with a Chocolate Ganache touched by Tabasco and a cold coconut swell to cool the hot. The sweetest champagne, Moet et Chandon Nectar Imperial was just right for this final delight.

Dessert was also accompanied by an entertaining art auction conducted by Kenneth Faustin of Aruba, a professional auctioneer. Between bites, bidders flashed their numbers as they hotly contended for some beautiful works by noted artists. Mo Mohammad, Claude Lecelle, Maria Theresa Martinez, Laureen Eman, Stan Kuiperi, Alida Martinez and Miriam d’Lisle, amongst other artists, had all contributed works to the event, and a good portion of the proceeds from the sale will go towards the purchase of art supplies that will be donated to local schools.

The perfect end to this perfect evening came with a thank you to the chefs responsible for this remarkable meal by festival organizers Franz Sydow and Rona Coster, who are also owed a mention for organizing this beautiful and delicious event.

The night was not quite over, as the walls to the dining portion of the Palm Beach Ballroom fell away and it became a concert hall. The sound of music filled the halls of the resort as the Venezuelan band EA rocked the room, and hundreds that had just purchased tickets for the concert arrived. This year, organizers knew what they were doing, as a good portion of the room was set up as a dance floor, not only a concert hall. Last year’s concert, “God Save Queen” was a great show of classic rock that everyone loves to listen to, but the disco beat of this year’s tribute to Earth, Wind, and Fire is the kind of music that makes everyone want to dance. Whether the music was a blast from the past and reminiscent for some of their younger days, or they were a member of the newest generation, attendees could not stay off the dance floor, the beat was so infectious.

The aim of the Aruba Wine, Food & Art Festival is to feed not only the body, but the mind and the soul. The organizers seek to embody everything that one considers “La Dolce Vita” in three delicious, delightful days of varied events, and the proof of the last two years is that they succeed admirably. What surprises will they have in store for us with the Wine, Food, & Art Festival #3? We can’t wait to find out!